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Client Profile Gamblers in Treatment 1998/99

Saskatchewan Health, in co-operation with health districts, has been responsible for the co-ordination and delivery of problem gambling treatment services since 1994. In 1998/99, 749 individuals entered health district problem gambling treatment programs: 620 individuals with gambling problems and 129 family members. The following analysis is based on the 620 individuals in treatment and cannot be extrapolated to represent the characteristics of problem gamblers in the general population.

Highlights

- The number of gambling clients in treatment increased from 394 in 1997/98 to 620 in 1998/99.
- The number of family members receiving counselling services increased from 100 in 1997/98 to 129 in 1998/99.
- The most common game played by clients was video lottery terminals (92%), followed by lotteries (67%) and casino games (43%).
- Of those who played VLTs, 26% played daily.
- Eighteen percent of gambling clients also had problems with alcohol or drugs.
- There were more male clients (60%) than female clients (40%).
- Thirty-five percent of clients were 30 to 39 years of age.
- Sixty-nine percent of clients had borrowed money to gamble in the last year.
- Clients on average spent \$1,431 per month on gambling.
- Thirty-nine percent of all clients had a household income of under \$30,000 per year.
- Nine percent of gambling clients were unemployed, compared to 6% of the general population in Saskatchewan.

Gambling Patterns

Participation Levels

Video lottery terminals (VLTs) were the most commonly played game by gambling clients (92%) in 1998/99. VLTs were followed in popularity by lottery tickets (67%) and casino games (43%). Horse racing was the least commonly played game (8%) (Table 1, Figure 1).

Table 1: Proportion of Gambling Clients Participating in Each Type of Gambling Activity

	Men %	Women %	Both %
VLT	92%	92%	92%
Lotteries	66%	70%	67%
Casino games	44%	43%	43%
Bingo	23%	61%	38%
Raffles	31%	39%	34%
Pull tabs	28%	36%	31%
Card games	20%	18%	19%
Sports betting	16%	2%	11%
Games of skill	15%	3%	10%
Horse races	10%	6%	8%





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Highlights

- The number of gambling clients in treatment increased from 584 in 1997/98 to 620 in 1998/99.
- The number of family members receiving counselling services increased from 100 in 1997/98 to 129 in 1998/99.
- The most common game played by clients was video lottery terminals (92%), followed by lotteries (67%) and casino games (43%).
- Of those who played VLTs, 26% played daily.
- Eighteen percent of gambling clients also had problems with alcohol or drugs.
- There were more male clients (60%) than female clients (40%).
- Thirty-five percent of clients were 30 to 39 years of age.
- Sixty-nine percent of clients had borrowed money to gamble in the last year.
- Clients on average spent \$1,431 per month on gambling.
- Thirty-nine percent of all clients had a household income of under \$30,000 per year.
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Gambling Patterns

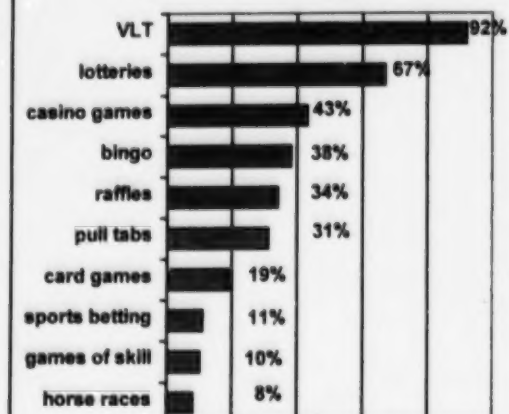
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Figure 1: Participation Rates



VLTs and lotteries were the most commonly played game for men and women. (Table 1). Women had higher participation rates than men for playing bingo, raffles and pull tabs. Men had higher participation rates for sports betting, games of skill and horse races.

Bingo had the third highest participation rate for women (61%), while casino games had the third highest participation rate for men (44%).

Frequency of Gambling

Twenty-six percent of VLT players played daily. Of those who played sports betting, 12% played daily. Nine percent played casino games daily, and 8% played bingo daily. The overwhelming majority of VLT players (86%) played either daily or weekly. Forty-six percent of lottery players and 44% of casino players played daily or weekly (Figures 2 & 3). The only gambling activities where the majority of participants played less often than monthly were raffles (84%), and horse races (83%).

Figure 2: Daily Players

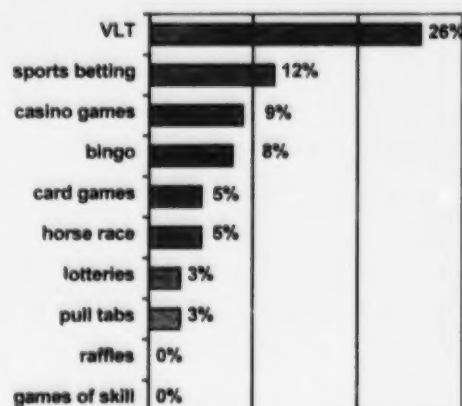
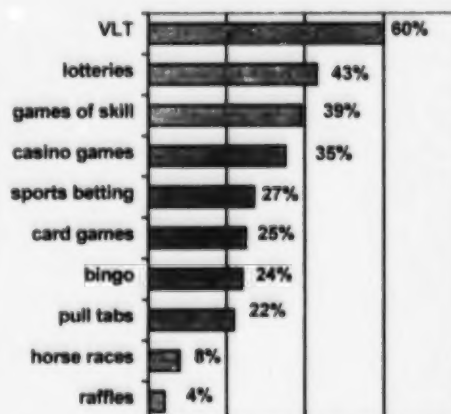


Figure 3: Weekly Players



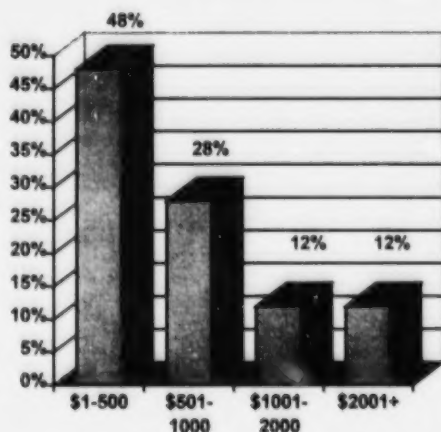
Age Gambling Started

Almost one-third (32%) of clients started gambling before the age of 20. The average age at which clients first gambled was 28. Men started gambling earlier on average (27 years old) than women (29 years old). Thirty-six percent of men started gambling before the age of 20, compared to 26% of women.

Amount Spent

Gambling clients spent an average of \$1,431 per month on gambling activities. Men spent on average \$1,724 per month compared to \$1,039 for women.

Figure 4: Amount Spent per Month



Approximately half of all clients (48%) spent \$500 or less a month on gambling activities. Another quarter (28%) spent between \$501 and \$1,000 a month. The remainder (24%) spent over \$1,000 a month (Figure 4).

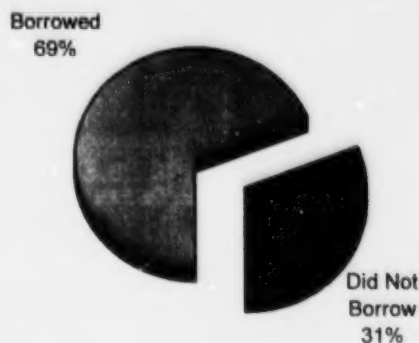
Level of Borrowing

A high proportion (69%) of gambling clients had borrowed money for gambling in the last year (Figure 5). The average amount borrowed was \$5,404.

Most Lost in One Day

On average, the largest amount of money lost gambling in one day by clients was \$1,275. The most lost in one day was higher for men (\$1,518) than for women (\$922).

Figure 5: Borrowed to Gamble



Characteristics

Sex, Age, Marital Status, and Ancestry

Sixty percent of all clients were male (Table 2, Figure 6).

Figure 6: Sex of Gambling Clients



The average age of both male and female gambling clients was 40 years old. The largest number of gambling clients were in the 30-39 age group (35%), followed by 40-49 year olds (32%) (Table 2, Figure 7).

Over half of all gambling clients (59%) were either married or lived in a common-law relationship. Seventeen percent were single. Twenty-two percent were divorced or separated, and two percent were widowed. This compares with 1996 Statistics Canada figures that indicates that 64% of the adult population in Saskatchewan was married (including common-law and separated), 23% were single, 5% divorced, and 8% widowed.

Compared to other provinces, Saskatchewan has the highest proportion of aboriginal peoples in its population. People of Aboriginal ancestry accounted for 19% of the gambling client population. This is slightly higher than their proportion in the general Saskatchewan population, an estimated 11% in 1996. A higher proportion of female clients were aboriginal (24%) than male clients (16%).

Table 2: Sex and Age of Gambling Clients

	No.	%
<i>All clients</i>	620	100%
<u>Sex</u>		
Male	375	60%
Female	245	40%
<u>Age</u>		
15-19	7	1%
20-29	93	15%
30-39	214	35%
40-49	198	32%
50-59	78	13%
60+	28	5%

Employment

In 1998/99, 9% of gambling clients were unemployed compared to the 1998

Saskatchewan unemployment rate of 6%. Sixty percent of clients were employed full time, 15% part time, 8% were not looking for work, 3% were retired, 3% were students, and 2% were keeping house (Table 3).

Table 3: Employment Status of Gambling Clients

	%
Full time	60%
Part time	15%
Looking for work	9%
Not looking for work	8%
Retired	3%
Student	3%
Keeping house	2%

Education

In 1998/99, 30% of gambling clients had not completed Grade 12. One third (34%) had received some post-secondary education, either at a university or technical institute (Table 4). In 1996, 43% of Saskatchewan residents those 15 years of age or older had received some post-secondary education. (1996 is the most recent data available)

Table 4: Education of Gambling Clients

	%
Less than grade 9	5%
Grades 9-11	25%
Grade 12	37%
Some post-secondary	18%
Completed post-secondary	16%

Occupation

The occupation distribution of gambling clients in 1998/99 was 21% skilled trades, 15% semi-skilled, 11% professional, 9% unskilled, 7% clerical, 5% sales rep, 5% managerial, 5% small business owner, 4% hotel/restaurant, 3% sales clerk, 3% keeping house, 3% student, 2% retired, 1% farmer, and 4% other.

Income

Gambling clients had substantially lower family incomes than the Saskatchewan population (Table 5).

Table 5: Combined Household Income		
	Gambling Clients %	Sask. Pop. 1996 %
Under \$10,000	8%	3%
\$10,000-\$19,999	16%	11%
\$20,000-\$29,999	15%	15%
\$30,000-\$39,999	17%	16%
\$40,000-\$49,999	15%	12%
\$50,000-\$74,999	21%	26%
\$75,000 and over	8%	18%

Thirty-nine percent of all clients had an annual combined household income of under \$30,000. In comparison, less than a third (29%) of the 1996 Saskatchewan population had a family income of under \$30,000. The income category with the largest number of clients was \$50,000-\$74,999 (21%).

Substance Use Problems

Problems with alcohol or other drugs were reported by 18% of gambling clients.

Source of Referral

The most common source of referral in 1998/99 was self or family (56%). The second most common source was the gambling helpline (12%). The remaining referral sources included legal services (6%), alcohol/drug treatment agency (5%), mental health (4%), physician/hospital (4%), employer/employee assistance program (4%), private counsellors (3%), Gamblers Anonymous/self-help (2%), Department of Social Services (2%), social agency (1%) and other (2%).

Legal Involvement

A total of 55 gambling clients (9%) were involved with the legal system, compared to 8% in 1997/98. Twenty-four had received a probation order, 17 had charges pending, 8 were incarcerated, and 6 had received a restitution order. Women were slightly more likely than men to be involved with the legal system (10% vs. 8%).

Trend Analysis

Number of Gambling Clients

The number of gambling clients has increased each year since gambling treatment services were made available (Table 6). Although there were significant annual increases of gambling clients over the previous 3 years, the small increase of 6% in 1998/99 may indicate that the increase in treatment clients is stabilizing.

Table 6: Number of Gambling Clients, 1994/95 – 1998/99

	94/95	95/96	96/97	97/98	98/99
Gamblers	185	364	447	584	620
Men	115	219	284	375	375
Women	70	145	163	209	245

Family Members

Problem gambling can have significant impacts on family members. Family members may experience feelings of anger, resentment, isolation and desperation. Accessing treatment services to deal with family issues may be important. Family members may benefit from receiving specialized treatment services dealing with the impact of problem gambling on families.

The number of family members receiving problem gambling treatment services from health districts has increased each year (Table 7).

Table 7: Number of Family Members in Treatment 1994/95 – 1998/99

	94/95	95/96	96/97	97/98	98/99
Family Members	21	49	74	100	129

Participation Levels

Since 1995/96 the participation rate among clients playing VLTs has remained stable at approximately 90% (Table 8). The participation rates for lotteries, casino games and bingo initially declined from 1994/95 to 1995/96. However, from 1996/97 to 1998/99 the participation rates for these three types of gambling increased. The greatest increase in the participation rate was for casino games, which increased from 26% to 43%.

Table 8: Participation Rates 1994/95 – 1998/99

	94/95	95/96	96/97	97/98	98/99
VLT	84%	91%	90%	91%	92%
Lotteries	63%	56%	55%	61%	67%
Casino Games	33%	24%	26%	40%	43%
Bingo	39%	30%	30%	34%	38%

Age Gambling Started

The average age at which clients started gambling has increased from 24 in 1994/95 to 28 in 1998/99.

Amount Spent

The average amount spent per month of \$1,431 in 1998/99 was slightly higher than the previous 4-year average of \$1,391.

Level of Borrowing

There has been a steady drop in the percent of clients who borrowed to gamble. In 1995/96, 81% borrowed to gamble compared to 69% in 1998/99. The average amount borrowed increased from \$3,064 in 1997/98 to \$5,404 in 1998/99.

Most Lost in One Day

The average of \$1,275 lost in one day in 1998/99 is 19% higher than the average of \$1,069 lost by clients in 1997/98. Between 1994/95 and 1997/98 there was little change in the average amount lost.

Sex, Age and Ancestry

From 1994/95 to 1998/99 the percentage of male clients has remained steady at about 60%. The average age of clients increased slightly from 38 to 40 in the same period.

The proportion of clients of Aboriginal ancestry has ranged between 13% and 19%.

Education

The educational level of gambling clients has changed since 1994/95. The combined percentage of clients who have either completed high school, or who have some post secondary education has increased significantly over the last 5 years. The percentage of those who have at least a high school education has increased from 58% in 1994/95 to 70% in 1998/99. (Table 9).

**Table 9: Changes in Education
1994/95 – 1998/99**

	94/95	95/96	96/97	97/98	98/99
	%	%	%	%	%
Less than high school	43%	37%	36%	32%	30%
High school	33%	36%	35%	39%	37%
Post secondary	25%	27%	29%	29%	33%

Occupation

There has been little change in the occupational status of gambling clients since 1994/95 (Table 10).

**Table 10: Changes in Occupation
1994/95 – 1998/99**

	94/95	95/96	96/97	97/98	98/99
	%	%	%	%	%
Skilled trade	21%	22%	23%	21%	21%
Semi-skilled	14%	14%	13%	13%	15%
Unskilled	12%	9%	8%	9%	9%
Professional	11%	13%	12%	12%	11%

Income

The proportion of clients with higher education and higher income has increased since 1994/95. This is also reflected in an increase in household incomes of gambling clients (Table 11).

**Table 11: Changes in Household Income
1994/95 – 1998/99**

	94/95	95/96	96/97	97/98	98/99
Under \$10,000	13%	10%	8%	10%	8%
\$10,000-\$19,999	25%	21%	23%	17%	16%
\$20,000-\$29,999	22%	22%	19%	17%	15%
\$30,000-\$39,999	15%	17%	15%	21%	17%
\$40,000-\$49,999	10%	10%	10%	10%	15%
\$50,000-\$74,999	10%	14%	15%	18%	21%
\$75,000 and over	4%	6%	9%	7%	8%

There has been a decrease in the proportion of clients at the low end of the income scale. The proportion of clients with household

incomes over \$50,000 has increased from 14% in 1994/95 to 29% in 1998/99.

Legal Involvement

The proportion of clients who were involved with the justice system in 1998/99 (9%) has been relatively consistent for the last 4 years (range 8% - 12%), but less than the figure in 1994/95 (30%).

Substance Use Problems

Eighteen percent of 1998/99 clients reported problems with alcohol and drugs. This is higher than the 4-year average of 13%.

Notes:

1. Not included in this data are clients participating in collateral programs. Collateral programs are designed for family members and others who are affected by an individual's gambling problems but do not have gambling problems themselves. In 1998/99 there were 129 collateral clients.
2. Percentages may not total 100 due to rounding.
3. In the table **Changes in Income**, the income categories shifted slightly between 1997/98 and previous years. Previous income categories were \$10,000 and under, 10,001-20,000, 20,001-30,000, 30,001-40,000, 40,001-50,000, 50,001-75,000 and 75,001 and over.
4. In the table **Proportion of Gambling Clients Participating in Each Type of Gambling Activity**, gambling clients may be included in more than one category.

Caution: This information represents only those clients who received health district counselling services for gambling problems. Those who did not seek treatment or who sought assistance from physicians, hospitals, mental health centres or elsewhere are not included in the data.

Sources: Saskatchewan Health, Community Care Branch's *Management Information System* (1994/95, 1995/96, 1996/97, 1997/98 and 1998/99 data); Statistics Canada, *The Nation: Complete Edition, Census 96*, Catalogue 93F0020XCB96003; Bureau of Statistics, *Saskatchewan Statistics: Labour Force Statistics*, Sept. 4, 1998, Table 3.

Saskatchewan Health **Focus Sheets** use current data to provide in-depth information on different aspects of substance use and problem gambling in Saskatchewan. For a list of other **Focus Sheet** titles, please contact Saskatchewan Health. Focus Sheets are supplemented by **Fast Factsheets**, which cover a variety of topics.

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